ruplets 1 case. In the nine years from 1826 to 1834, there were 645 cases of triplets. From various sources of information, public and private, I have met with fifteen cases of quadruplets, and four cases of quintuplets. At Drogii, in Bessarabia, in December, 1831, a peasant woman of ordinary strength bore six children at a birth! They were born alive, but died within twenty-four hours. It is a question, whether taking an equal number of cases, these plural births are not much more frequent among the poor than among the upper classes of society.—*Lond. Med. Gaz.*, Aug. 1845, from *Zeitschrift der Staatsarzneikunde*, 1844.

MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE AND TOXICOLOGY.

73. *Phosphoric Acid.—Variety in its effects when pure or impure.* (*Caspar's Wochenschrift.*)—Many physicians (in Germany?) are of opinion, that the continued use of medicinal doses of phosphoric acid prove injurious to the coats of the stomach, that this is indicated after death by red or reddish-brown spots. Others again assert that they have employed it for many years with uniform success, and no injurious consequences.

This discrepancy induced MM. Weigel and Krug to conjecture that the difference was owing to some chemical change in the article prescribed. That the acid might contain some phosphorous acid, and even possibly in some cases, arsenious acid, and thus the injurious effects might originate from these.

Pure phosphoric acid was prepared—then phosphorus was treated with a diminished quantity of nitric acid, leaving phosphoric acid containing phosphorous acid, in the proportion of ten per cent., and lastly phosphoric acid was made, containing a quarter per cent. of arsenic.

A series of experiments were undertaken on rabbits. It was at first intended to give it to them in divided doses, similar to the mode pursued when administering to the human subject, but this was found impracticable. The acids in a concentrated state were then given, by applying them in drops to the base of the tongue. The result was, that the pure phosphoric acid induced no injurious result, but the adulterated caused a *gangrenous phlegmasia* of the mucous coat of the stomach, and the cause of this evidently was, the development of phosphuretted hydrogen. The arsenical phosphoric acid proved to be a violent poison, even in small doses.

The experimenters are hence of opinion, that when gastric injury occurs, it must be owing to the use of an impure phosphoric acid—or in other words, its containing phosphorous acid—a circumstance (they add), which may readily occur, when sufficient nitric acid is not employed in its preparation.—*Encyclographie des Sciences Médicales*, February, 1845. T. R. B.

74. *Feigned Disease.*—"A young person of hysteric disposition was bled and soon afterwards became affected with contraction of the fingers into the palm of the hand. Under the idea that the nerve had been wounded, the cicatrix left by the venesection was removed; the spasmodic action of the fingers immediately became relaxed, and their use was restored. By degrees, the spasm returned, and the operation was repeated with the same good effect, less prompt but not less perfect than before. The spasm returned a third time.

"I now began to suspect that even this strange degree of spasm, during which the nails actually grew into the palm of the hand, was not altogether real. I suggested that the patient should be blindfolded, and that a mock operation should be performed. It was performed: superficial but painful lacerations were made in the integuments; it was pretended that a nerve was laid bare, was divided, and it was loudly said, "Now the spasm will cease, and she will open her hand," and she did open her hand! Water was coloured with the tinctura lavendula composita, for the want of blood. Again, after a time the spasm seemed to be returning, but now the whole truth was told, and the patient, for fear of exposure, took care to remain well."

This case is quoted from Dr. Marshall Hall's *Practical Observations and Suggestions in Medicine*, in the Medico-Chirurgical Review, with the observation, that if

Dr. Hall did not vouch for its authenticity, they would have taken it for one of the cleverly told stories in the "Diary of a Physician."

Apocryphal as this narrative may seem, still we have had a very similar instance in this city during the last winter, under the care of our principal surgeon. I merely advert to it at present, in the hope that the particulars may be published.
T. R. B.

75. *Burns from Gunpowder*—"In burns from gunpowder, it is to be observed, that from the momentary application of the cause, the injury is often of a superficial kind, unless in those cases, where, from the close contact, or large quantity of the powder, or from the accidental combustion of the patient's clothing, the parts become extensively and deeply involved. In many of the injuries originating from explosions of gunpowder, the hands and face are more particularly affected, and here the structure of the parts, as well as the nature of the accident, contribute to limit the number and extent of the vesications; the surface is blackened, the eyelashes, eyebrows, whiskers and whatever hairs may be contiguous to the affected part, are singed or entirely destroyed: grains of gunpowder are found lodged in the skin, some of them partially and others completely buried in it. When this has taken place, an indelible mark remains after the cure, not, as some have supposed, from each distinct granule of the powder remaining entire and enclosed in a minute capsule, but rather, I believe, from the granules being decomposed, and partially discharged or absorbed, while the carbonaceous or colouring matter remains in the skin, as in those letters or emblematic figures which we often see artificially imprinted on the arms of soldiers and seamen, by pricking out the figure with a needle, and inserting a little gunpowder into the skin; a mode of marking deserters, which is enjoined by the articles of war."—*Sir George Ballingall's Outlines of Military Surgery.* T. R. B.

76. *Sudden death from a blow on the Jugular Vein.*—At Portsmouth (England), a woman aged fifty, came to her death in the following manner. Deceased was a married woman, but lived with a young man named Tucker. They were returning home in the evening, quarreling. She was suddenly observed to be struck by some one, and was seen to run into the road and drop, screaming. She was immediately taken up by some lookers-on, and conveyed to her lodgings, but she never spoke more, and expired on the following evening. Suspicion fell on Tucker. He was arrested. A very protracted investigation was held before the coroner's jury, which ended in a verdict of manslaughter. The surgeon who examined the body, pronounced it to be in a very healthy state, none of the usual signs of an irregular life being visible. The whole system and brain, (with the exception of an effusion caused by the blow), were perfectly sound. The blow took effect upon the neck, over the jugular.

The editor mentions an additional instance, furnished by a gentleman high in the medical staff of the East India Company's service. Two fine healthy young men, in one of the Company's European regiments, were sparring for amusement, when one hit the other a heavy blow on the side of the neck, over the jugular vein. The young man thus struck, dropped down and instantly died. On examination, a large quantity of effused blood was found in the lateral ventricles, as also in the fourth ventricle.—*Lancet,* Jan. 11, 1845. T. R. B.

77. *Five individuals poisoned by arsenic, with remarks on the use of that poison, by the mountaineers of Austria and Styria,* by Dr. A. Flechner. (*Transactions of the Imperial Medical Association of Vienna.*)—In April, 1838, five individuals residing close to some mines at Schogmuhl, in Lower Austria, were attacked with symptoms of gastritis. The fever was slight, but there were much depression and debility. The author suspected the water of which these individuals drank to be the true cause, as they did not all eat together. He was confirmed in this supposition by the fact, that a large quantity of cobalt containing arsenic, had lain close to the spring during the winter, and he suggested that a portion of the arsenious acid in the cobalt ore had been dissolved by the snow and rain, and had filtered through the earth into the spring. The hydrated peroxide of iron given in small quantity at short intervals, produced a rapid and perfect cure in a few days. The